

the wire

Your EdTech Newsletter

Cloud Computing Lands in LV

By Allen Bordelon, Director of Technology

La Vernia ISD, traditionally known as “The Home of The Bears”, is now also “The Home of Cloud Computing.” Always looking for cutting-edge technologies that can improve the user experience for students and staff, La Vernia ISD has become one of the first districts in South Texas to provide an internally-hosted Cloud Computing environment.

You may be asking, “What is Cloud Computing?” Cloud Computing is a term used to describe the provision of computing resources that are scalable (the more processing power or memory you need, the more you receive for your application) and that are virtualized (your files are no longer dependent upon a specific physical server or storage device that is subject to failure; it is spread across many devices acting as a virtual whole with significant redundancy to ensure the integrity and availability of your data and applications, even when individual servers or storage devices may malfunction).

Beyond improving your service experience when using your computer, Cloud Computing also saves the District, and therefore you as a taxpayer, money. With traditional computers

♦ See CLOUD Page 3



Campus Technologist Tom Renschler shows LV Intermediate School students how to access cloud-based resources. Photo by Lisa Smith

LV Libraries to Receive Technology Makeover

By Cheryl Young, HS Librarian

The La Vernia ISD campus libraries are being transformed into “Online-Powered School Libraries” by the deployment of Web 2.0 technology tools and wireless netbook “mini” computers. This will provide 24/7 access for our students and community members.

Weblogs, wikis, ebooks, protected social networking sites, podcasts and videocasts, RSS news feeds (Real Simple Syndication) and social bookmarking web tools such as digg and del.icio.us (social bookmarking is a method for Internet users to organize, store, search, and manage bookmarks and web pages on the Internet) will all transform the instructional environment in our libraries. These new resources will provide ideal supplemental support to our existing online circulation desks, card catalogs, and our extensive online reference, research, newspaper and periodical resources.

What are You Doing with Classroom Technology?

You might be our next big Technology Star! We want to hear all about your innovative use of classroom technology. Want to be featured in our next issue? Email your story to TechStar@LVschools.net

La Vernia ISD



Middle School to Create Online Math Curriculum

By Charlette Goodwiler, MS Math Chair

The LVISD Middle School will redesign the curriculum in our grades 6-8 mathematics classrooms to conform to the latest education research from Marc Prensky regarding Digital Native learning styles, and to incorporate David Warlick and Sara Armstrong's New Literacy 4-E's concepts.

Marc Prensky's research on learning styles is based on the concept that our students are "Digital Natives", born into a digital, networked world where immediate feedback and instant gratification are expected.

Today's students think and learn quite differently from the way we as teachers knew years ago in our "Digital Immigrant" world, the "old country" before any digital technologies were common. To us, information was a product, instead of just a building block as it is to our digital native students.

The online curriculum will implement the New Literacy 4-E's concepts (a play on the old 3-R's), in which Reading has now been transformed into Exposing Knowledge (finding information, then decoding the information, evaluating all of the information and then finally organizing the information into new personal digital libraries), 'Rithmetic is transformed into Employing Information (using basic math skills and computer-aided processing of numbers, and processing media), 'Riting is transformed into Expressing Ideas Compellingly (writing effectively and communicating with multimedia), and Ethics is

added as a crucial study skill (investigating information for reliability, respecting other's information property rights, while realizing and respecting the importance and nature of our information infrastructure).

LV Intermediate School Offers "Lunch & Learn"



Parents and grandparents listen to online safety tips during luncheon. Photo by Lisa Smith

By Phoebe Reyes, IS Technologist

Parents and grandparents had lunch with their children while learning how to keep them safe online during the recent "Lunch & Learn" held at LV Intermediate School.

This innovative program is designed to provide a unique opportunity for caregivers to share a meal with their children while learning about what their children are doing on the web and how to keep them safe from predators and potential identity thieves.

"This is an excellent way for parents to learn more about our school and the efforts we put forth to protect their children online, while partnering with us to provide that crucial layer of protection when the children are at home." Principal Becky Johanson said during a recent School Board meeting. See the related feature on page 4. - Ed.

the Wire

Your EdTech Newsletter

A Quarterly Publication
of the La Vernia ISD
Technology Department

We Believe That:

- The implementation of technology improves student achievement and promotes higher-order thinking.
- The integration of technology transforms the teaching and learning process.
- Technology should enhance effective teaching, not replace it.
- Technology is a critical resource for the instruction of students and the management of the school district.
- Technology is a critical tool for life-long learning.
- Technology should enhance the opportunities for collaboration and communication between and among students, staff members, parents and the community.

Edited and Published by
Allen D. Bordelon,
a.k.a. "Ed Tech Man"

Staff Photographer
Lisa A. Smith

Web Publishing by
April Rojas

Send Comments to:
the Wire

La Vernia ISD
13600 US Hwy 87 West
La Vernia, TX 78121

Comment via Email to:
theWire@LVschools.net

Coming in the Next Issue:

- ☒ How to create a webpage
- ☒ Robot building contest



Cloud Computing in LV

♦Continued from Page 1

every few years the computing devices have to be replaced as applications and data require more memory, more storage and faster processing speeds. This becomes very costly, and is almost impossible to keep up with in a very rapidly growing school district like ours.

Cloud Computing realizes a greater economy of scale by moving all the “work” done by your computer, the processing, computation tasks and storage, from your desktop to centrally-located server and storage farms which are very cost-effective both to maintain and upgrade as demand increases.

Your old “computer” is then replaced by a “Thin Client” terminal that serves as your local display and input device but has no real processing or storage of its own to become outdated or need replacement.

Savings are substantial, as a typical Thin Client with a 17” LCD flat-panel display costs less than \$300 to purchase, will last for up to 10 years, and uses less total electricity than a 40-watt light bulb. Compared to older computers that consumed between 150 - 300 watts of power, these units will save on both electricity consumption and consequently on the cost of air conditioning.

As we begin the rollout of these new Cloud Computing systems into our schools and offices, I invite you to join the excitement as we welcome this cutting-edge technology into La Vernia ISD with open arms!

For information on when you will receive your Thin Clients, ask your local Campus Technologist.

LV Intermediate School Tech Club Students Prepare for Bright Future



Technology Director Allen Bordelon, Sponsor of the Tech Club, shows LV Intermediate School students how to properly and safely disassemble and reassemble computers during a recent club meeting. *Photo by Lisa Smith*

By Becky Johanson, IS Principal

The students participating in the weekly meetings of our Tech Club on each Thursday afternoon at the Intermediate School are doing much more than just having fun with technology; they are learning about computers, handhelds and robots in preparation for a possible future career in the technology industry.

LV Director of Technology and Tech Club Sponsor Allen Bordelon teaches our 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students how computers operate. He shows them how to take a computer apart and reassemble it again; the computer must work once the student reassembles it.

“All of this is part of the joy of learning technology” Mr. Bordelon said during our recent open house, “as children handle all the parts inside of the computer, learn the function of each part, see how all the parts fit together to make up a computer, and finally put everything back together again and prove it will work properly. It really gives them a sense of pride that they can accomplish a task most adults cannot do.”

If you want to incorporate some of these activities into your own technology lesson, visit with Mr. Bordelon; he will help you prepare your students for a bright future!



Protecting kids or free speech: Where to draw the line?

Panel discussion explores the intersection of media, child safety, and the First Amendment

By Maya T. Prabhu, Assistant Editor; Reprinted from eSchool News

Controlling what children see on TV, online, and on other electronic media requires a delicate balancing act between the First Amendment rights of content providers and the desire to protect kids from inappropriate material, said panelists during a November 2 discussion at the Georgetown Law Center in Washington, D.C.

"The law is not settled on this subject," said Jim Steyer, chief executive officer and founder of Common Sense Media, which sponsored the discussion along with the Georgetown Law Center. He added that "reasonable minds can disagree" on where the intersection of children's safety and developing media should lie.

The rapidly changing world of digital media—including TV, video games, the internet, and mobile devices—creates many opportunities for children but also presents potential dangers, panelists noted, including a greater chance of exposing children to inappropriate content. How to reduce this likelihood without impinging on the free-speech rights of broadcasters and publishers was the subject of the discussion.

As the Georgetown discussion revealed, there are no clear-cut answers to these questions; at times the conversation was heated, and the panelists frequently disagreed. "The best way to deal with this is to educate parents. If you don't, [children] are going to learn from their friends," said Maryland Attorney General Douglas Gansler, adding that technology advances faster than the laws are able to.



Q Joe D, LVHS Junior, asks:

"If you always push teaching us ethics, why do you block things and not let us earn your trust?"

A Ed Tech Man answers:

"I always encourage you to be responsible and ethical, and I do trust you, more than you know. However, I have a responsibility to your parents to keep you safe, and filtering (blocking) as much inappropriate content as possible is one way I do that. Also, as the District receives federal funds, we are required by law to filter the Internet on all your computers."

Study by McArthur Foundation Finds "Teachers are Obstacles"

By Dr. Diane Fisher, Dir. of Curriculum

Recent results from the most extensive U.S. study on teens and their use of digital media by the McArthur Foundation show that America's digital native students are developing important social and technical skills online.

Through trial and error, students explore various tools and acquire new forms of technical and media literacy, often at home without any help from their teachers.

Findings concluded that there is a very prevalent digital disconnect between students' technology use at home and at school.

Over 40% of students in grades 6-12 cite their teacher as "a major obstacle for when and where technology can be used at school."

We must transform our teachers from "obstacles" into facilitators who foster technology use.

Wee Bytes from Primary School

By Alyssa Snow, Primary Technologist

Second nine weeks update: We will be working through some different programs this nine weeks in Technology. First and Second grade students will continue to have fun exploring both Kid Pix and Edmark while they produce various projects and learn typing and math skills.

They will also learn to use all the toolbars, font styles, and both how to save and how to format their documents as they work on some "take-home" projects for the holidays.

Kindergarten will begin to learn Kid Pix, a program that is used to introduce much of the Microsoft Word terminology. Students will create projects and print some to take home. Thus far, they have thoroughly enjoyed seeing their own progress. With the holidays coming, projects are abundant!

